CLAIMS

1. (previously presented) A method of operating a game being provided to a player on a gaming machine comprising the steps of :

- displaying on the gaming machine a line game comprising symbols organised according to a line game structure;

- operating a meter displayed as at least three different statuses of an evolving symbol, said evolving symbol being part of said symbols organised according to said line game structure; and

- triggering a feature on the gaming machine based on at least one of said statuses.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the meter is used to gather occurrences ~~of at least one~~ of (1) a predetermined symbol; (2) a predetermined combination of symbols; (3) an event dependent of a game outcome; or ~~and~~ (4) an event independent of a game outcome.

3. (currently amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the event dependent of the game outcome comprises ~~is at least one of~~ (1) a winning outcome; (2) a losing outcome; or ~~and~~ (3) a prize value.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the event independent of the game outcome comprises ~~is at least one of~~ (1) a spin; (2) an elapsed length of time; or ~~and~~ (3) a bet value.

5. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said evolving symbol occurs on a reel, each occurrence of said evolving symbol comprising an Evolving Symbol Unit (ESU).

6. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein all ESUs evolve upon occurrence of an evolution trigger.

7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the evolution trigger occurs when the meter reaches a predetermined threshold.

8. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein only a portion of the ESUs evolve upon occurrence of an evolution trigger.

9. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the evolution trigger occurs when the meter reaches a predetermined threshold.

10. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the number of evolving ESUs is randomly selected.

11. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the evolving ESUs are randomly selected.

12. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the evolving ESUs are those displayed when the evolution trigger occurs.

13. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein all the evolving ESUs evolve at the same rate.

14. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein each evolving ESU evolves independently.

15. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the feature triggered in the game by said evolving symbol comprises is at least one of (1) a change in the symbol prize value; (2) a

new pay table; (3) a bonus payout; (4) a wild feature; (5) an on-screen bonus; or and (6) a second-screen bonus.

16. (currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein the meter is used to gather occurrences of at least one of (1) an event dependent of the game outcome; or and (2) an event independent of the game outcome, wherein said event dependent of the game outcome comprises comprising at least one of (1) a predetermined symbol; (2) a predetermined combination of symbols; (3) a winning outcome; (4) a losing outcome; or and (5) a prize value; and said event independent of the game outcome comprises comprising at least one of (1) a spin; (2) a length of time; or and (3) a bet value.

17. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein said evolving symbol occurs on a reel, each occurrence of said evolving symbol comprising an Evolving Symbol Unit (ESU) and wherein at least one of said ESUs evolve upon occurrence of an evolution trigger.

18. (previously presented) A game apparatus comprising:
- a meter gathering occurrences of a predetermined event;
- a display controller displaying a line game comprising symbols organised according to a game structure and said meter as at least three different statuses of an evolving symbol part of said symbols organised according to said game structure, and thus according at least in part to a value of said meter; and
- an evaluation means triggering a feature in said line game, based on at least one of said statuses.

19. (currently amended) A computer program embodied on a <u>non-transitory</u> computer readable medium or <u>on a non-transitory processor-readable</u> memory having codes adapted to, when executed by a computer, cause said computer to:

- gather occurrences of a predetermined event in a meter;

- display a line game comprising symbols organised according to a game structure and said meter as at least three different statuses of an evolving symbol part of said symbols organised according to said game structure; and

- trigger a feature based on at least one of said statuses.

20. (cancelled)

21. (cancelled)